

In the Specification:

On page 1, kindly rewrite the first paragraph to read as follows:

The invention relates to a sluice system for a vacuum coating facility for coating substrates that can be moved through the vacuum coating facility in a direction of conveyance. On the input and output sides, the ~~said~~-sluice system comprises a prevacuum sluice chamber and a transfer chamber adjoining a coating chamber, wherein a fine vacuum can be regulated before the transfer chamber on the input side in the direction of conveyance and after the transfer device on the output side in the direction of conveyance.

Kindly rewrite pages 6-7 to read as follows:

The invention will be explained by means of an embodiment example. The sluice system 1 on the input side for in-line coating facilities is shown in the accompanying drawing. Only the components relevant for the invention are shown. In the sluice system 1 according to the invention, the transfer chamber 3 is connected to the prevacuum sluice chamber 2, which in turn directly adjoins the coating chamber 4. The individual chambers are separated from each other via vacuum system sluice valves 5. The prevacuum is generated in the prevacuum sluice chamber 2 by prevacuum pump systems 6 connected in parallel to the prevacuum sluice chamber. These pump systems respectively consist of a Roots pump 7 as a main pump 8 and a rotary slide-valve pump 9 connected in series as a backing pump. Both connections of the prevacuum pump system 6 can be separated from the prevacuum sluice chamber 2 via regulating valves 11. A fine vacuum pump system 12 with four turbo-molecular pumps 13 as main pumps 14 is connected in parallel arrangement to the prevacuum sluice chamber 2. A rotary slide-valve pump 9 of lesser power is connected in series to these main pumps 14 as a support pump 9. The connections of the fine vacuum pump system 12 can also be separated from the prevacuum sluice chamber 2 via regulating valves 16. A connection line 17 between the pressure side of the main pumps 11 of the fine vacuum system ~~14~~12 and the intake side of the main pump 8 of one of the two prevacuum systems ~~8~~6, separable via a further regulating valve, realizes a bypass connection between the two vacuum systems. After one or more substrates have been fed into the prevacuum sluice chamber, the prevacuum is regulated via the operation of the prevacuum pump

systems 6. During this time, the regulating valves 6 of the fine vacuum system ~~46~~12 and the regulating valve 18 of the connection line ~~48~~17 are closed. At the same time, the turbomolecular pumps 13 are already operated in a stand-by stage. The turbo-molecular pumps 13 require a long startup time of up to 15 minutes corresponding to their design. However, they can be kept in immediate operational readiness after their startup time by means of a vacuum pressure support. The turbomolecular pumps 13 are therefore run in permanent operation, whereby the support pump 15 connected upstream of the turbomolecular pumps 13 generates a vacuum support pressure of approx.  $10^{-5}$  bar for the turbo-molecular pumps 13 in standby mode with closed regulating valves 11, 16. As the intake volume to be pumped approaches zero for this, only a low power is necessary for the support pump 15 to attain the vacuum support pressure. If a volume of approx.  $10^{-2}$  bar is attained in the prevacuum sluice chamber, the regulating valves 18 of the connecting line ~~48~~17 is opened. The turbo-molecular pumps 13 now evacuate in their work mode stage from the prevacuum sluice chamber 2, whereby the prevacuum pump system 6 connected via the connection line 17 is now operated in its function as a prevacuum pump of the fine vacuum pump system 12 and a separate efficient backing pump is saved for the turbomolecular pumps 13. The fine vacuum close to the process vacuum pressure of approximately  $10^{-4}$  bar to  $10^{-5}$  bar is generated directly after the prevacuum sluice chamber generation in the prevacuum sluice chamber 2, without the substrate having to pass further sluice chambers. The entire sluice contact until attainment of the fine vacuum is therefore reduced to approximately 60 seconds.